“Cannibalizing Memory: Teika, Sanetaka, and Fujioka’s *Sagoromo*”

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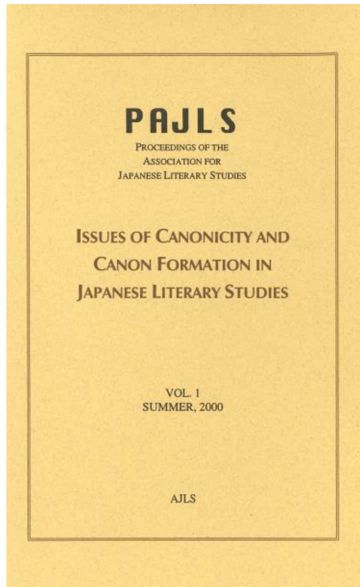


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# CANNIBALIZING MEMORY: TEIKA, SANETAKA, AND FUJIOKA'S *SAGOROMO*[1]

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In his essay "An Idea and Ideal of Literary Canon," Charles Altieri invokes Samuel Johnson to make a rather interesting remark about the relationship between the canon and memory. "If," he asserts, paraphrasing Johnson, "we are less in need of discovering new truths than remembering old ones, canons can play obvious social roles as selective memories of traditions or ideals."[2] This definition, however obvious, fascinates me: the canon as selective memories, not just of traditions or ideals, as Altieri posits, but of texts themselves; the canon, to explain my somewhat sensationalistic title, as acts of critical cannibalization, the enshrinement of specific scenes or aspects of given texts to serve extra-textual (extra-literary) purposes, in somewhat the same way that a mechanic scoops parts from an old engine to meet the needs of a different, often entirely distinct machine.

That canons can themselves field still more canonical subsets, and that these subsets vary according to the reason for selection, will of course surprise no one here. Art historians can attest to the specific segments from *Ise* (Azuma kudari) or *Genji* (Hatsune, Kochō, Ukifune) which come to stand in for these texts in visual representation; literature scholars will cite other passages (*Ise*'s Kari no tsukai or *Genji*'s Kiritsubo, Wakamurasaki) which dominate textual allusions, rescriptings and—more prosaically—graduate student generals' lists. These selective memories do not seem to

[1] At the conference, several participants questioned the appropriateness of the cannibalization metaphor, with its negative nuance, for classical Japan's allusive literature. Although I still maintain the negative trajectory of *Sagoromo* reception, I find the more general concern for our critical imagery an extremely stimulating one —and one which I hope the readers of this paper will reflect on for themselves.

[2] Charles Altieri, "An Idea and Ideal of Literary Canon" (1983), revised and reprinted in *Canons and Consequences: Reflections on the Ethical Force of Imaginative Ideals* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 21.

challenge each other, or the accepted stature of the source text as a whole; if anything, they reinforce its general canonicity: the great text is proven great in many ways. But what about less safely entrenched entries in the canon? When we recollect the non- or quasi-canonical text, how does this selective memory operate, and are the effects as benign?

As a way of exploring this question, I'd like to consider briefly three treatments of a quasi-canonical text from the late Heian period, *Sagoromo monogatari*, "A Tale of Narrow Robes". I say "quasi-"canonical because *Sagoromo*, written in the 1070s or so with the patronage of an imperial princess and her sekkanke sponsors, currently suffers somewhat mixed reviews within the academy—despite incredible popularity from Kamakura through Edo, attested by a hundred-plus manuscripts, multiple e-maki, exegeses, literary revisions and variants. Quite canonical critics have told me that *Sagoromo* simply does not qualify as literature and that those scholars who specialize in the study of this and other "late tales" can expect little happiness or professional success. The tale is almost unknown by the general Japanese public (much less the typical Western classical survey course) whose deferential recognition provides the broadest measure of true canonicity—and yet it is or soon will be included in all three major classical literature series. Even granting that popularity and canonicity are often distinct (if not mutually exclusive) qualities, how can we explain *Sagoromo*'s schizophrenic predicament?

My suspicion is that this state of affairs pivots on the problem of selective memory, or rather of selective memories, as illustrated by three canonical canon-builders: Fujiwara no Teika, that premier Kamakura arbiter of medieval poetics; Sanjōnishi Sanetaka, a Muromachi aristocrat known for and largely subsisting on his acumen in classical verse and prose; and Fujioka Sakutarō, an extremely influential Meiji scholar and critic. Despite their distinct histories and interests, all three men gave *Sagoromo* a special place in their literary/critical activity. And if their several renditions, like the authors themselves, are not equally well-placed, they do offer some insights into the ambiguities of *Sagoromo*'s current position

The earliest of these efforts, Teika's *Monogatari nihyakuban utaawase*, or Monogatari poetry match in 200 rounds, appears in 1205 or 1206.[3]

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[3] Available in Kyūsojin Hitaku and Takemoto Motoaki, eds., *Teika jihitsubon Monogatari nihyakuban utaawase* (Mikan kokubun shiryō kankōkai, 1955).

Strictly speaking, only the first half of this paper match—the so-called *Hyakuban utaawase* or *Genji-Sagoromo utaawase*—concerns us here. As that latter, informal title suggests, these first hundred rounds match poems from *Genji monogatari* and *Sagoromo*. Brief head-notes contextualize each poem, although not always faithfully. No judgements are recorded, but *Genji*'s preferential position on the left side, giving it the contest's opening entry, suggests their relative weights. What interests me in the match, though, is less the fact of the comparison (although this has become the constant of *Sagoromo*'s critical reputation) than its terms: its kind, themes and likely motivations.

Let me take the textual points first. Although Teika is well known for his interest in and preservation of tale literature, we find him here privileging *Sagoromo* (and *Genji*) not as monogatari but with respect to the genre on which he first made his name and upkeep: poetry. One obvious explanation for Teika's approach is of course patronal demand: according to a postscript, one of Teika's primary sponsors at the time, regent Fujiwara (Kujō) no Yoshitsune, specifically requested the match. Nor should we forget the relative contemporary prestige of the genres: despite *Mumyōzōshi* praise (about which you'll hear more tomorrow) and *Genji*'s prominence, monogatari in general retained a stigma as the lesser literature of women and children, and by approaching the canonical portion of this lesser genre—poetry—Teika (if not Yoshitsune) may have been hedging his bets.

But at least one aspect of the match suggests the selective memory of Teika himself: the unreliable headnotes I mentioned earlier. Joseph Sorensen has written convincingly of the *Shinkokinshū*-like techniques of association and progression which structure the match's choices and flow, and the relative weight of the *Genji* selections in determining the choice and order of its *Sagoromo* counterparts.[4] Perhaps in service of this effort, the contexts are often radically reduced (notably one *Sagoromo* sub-plot, reduced in five poems to "going to Koya"). While Teika could of course assume audience familiarity with both tales (most of those *Sagoromo* manuscripts I mentioned earlier date to the Kamakura period), what matters is not plot particulars but the general evocativeness of the poetic moment.

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[4] Joseph Tsuyoshi Sorensen, "Contest and Context: *Monogatari nihyakuban utaawase* and the Poetry Contest Genre" (M.A. thesis, UC Berkeley, 1999), 69-92.

If Teika's treatment was even-handed, however, its effects were not—probably because Teika's interests were not in *Sagoromo* itself to begin with. Over a decade prior to the match, Teika's father Shunzei had famously proclaimed *Genji*'s poetic value: (To compose poetry without consulting *Genji* is deplorable).[5] By matching *Sagoromo* with *Genji*, Teika not only authorized its suitability as a poetic source, even providing a list of pre-certified poems, he also demonstrated his own mastery and even transcendence of Shunzei's standards.[6] Teika's selective rendition of *Sagoromo* and its canonical worth—as poetry—seems calculated rather to prove his own. And so it worked: when the success of the first monogatari match provoked calls for a second (the so-called *Nochi hyakuban uta awase*), Teika matched *Genji*, not *Sagoromo*, against a fresh batch of contenders. No records suggest that Teika and his circle held *Sagoromo* lectures, and there is little to connect the tale with the monogatari Teika wrote some years later. Its prominence as a poetic source, however, continued—a partial canonization almost incidental to Teika's own.[7]

Two centuries after Teika, Sanjōnishi Sanetaka, another eminent classicist and patronal beneficiary, put the quasi-classic to similar use. Kumakura Isao has written of Sanetaka's patronage by Muromachi townsmen, of how the straitened noble effectively bartered renga corrections and *Ise monogatari* lectures for food, cash and even pressure on uncooperative managers of the family estates.[8] Sanetaka was also prominently linked to the Ashikaga shogunate, and through his frequent explications and copies of *Genji*, *Kokinshū* and other classics for these various audiences he helped preserve and so

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[5] The remark appears in *Roppyakuban utaawase*, or Poetry match in 600 rounds. Translation, slightly revised, from Sorensen 15.

[6] In fact, Teika may later have made his own statement on poetry: one version of his diary includes a 1233 entry on *Sagoromo*'s "stand-out" poetry (歌ニ於テハ抜群).

[7] Mitani Ei'ichi and Sekine Yoshiko summarize this trajectory, including mention in an imperially-authored poetry treatise, in the introduction to their *Sagoromo* annotation, *Sagoromo monogatari*, Nihon koten bungaku taikei 79 (Iwanami shoten, 1965), 3.

[8] See Kumakura, "Sanjōnishi Sanetaka, Takeno Jōō, and an Early Form of *Iemoto Seido*," trans. Steven D. Carter, *Literary Patronage in Late Medieval Japan*, ed. Carter (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1993), 95-103.

enable the modern canon.[9] Like Teika, Sanetaka also extended his talents to *Sagoromo*, producing in this more theatrical age not a poetry match but a Nō play, also entitled *Sagoromo*, performed at the Ashikaga's Muromachi Palace in 1503.[10]

Like Teika's poetry match, Sanetaka's play is selective about plot, but in mirror image: where Teika elides specifics to the point of effacing the broader tale, Sanetaka focuses on a particular facet—to much the same effect. While *Sagoromo* at least self-consciously privileges the hero's unrequited love for his foster-sister (both the opening scene and the hero's nickname[11] dramatize this passion), Sanetaka devoted his play to a different plotline: the hero's failed affair with the Second Princess. Without going into great detail, let me just summarize as follows. Early into the tale, the Emperor offers this princess to Sagoromo to prevent him from ascending into the heavens with a divine messenger. Sagoromo stays, and although he avoids the marriage out of loyalty to his beloved, his scruples do not preclude a conjugal visit. The princess bears a son who eventually, and with the intervention of Amateru kami, enables Sagoromo's unprecedented rise from second-generation commoner to the imperial throne. In his play, Sanetaka not only reduces *Sagoromo* to this relationship; he enlists poems from other plot-lines to further set the mood.

Why this choice of emphasis? It did not reflect the conventional wisdom on this text. (Paul tells me of another, lost *Sagoromo* nō revised by Zenchiku, but we have no way of knowing its emphasis). Teika's poetic selections, however summarily contextualized, draw fairly evenly from the tale's subplots, and a Teika contemporary—the *Mumyōzōshi* author—singled out Sagoromo's accession for special contempt. Nor was this subplot the most popular: by Sanetaka's day, interestingly, Sagoromo's affair with a lower-rankging woman seems to have captured the imagination, as the several

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[9] Detailed in Miyakawa Yōko, *Sanjōnishi Sanetaka to kotengaku* (Kazama shobō, 1995), 397-end.

[10] Haga Kōshirō, *Sanjōnishi Sanetaka* , Jinbutsu sōsho [shinsōhan] (Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1960) 120. The play is available in several collections, including *Yōkyoku sanbyakugojūban shū*, Nihon meicho zenshū 29 (Nihon meicho zenshū kankōkai, 1928), 693-94.

[11] *Sagoromo* arguably evokes the narrow robes of one who sleeps alone rather than in a lover's embrace and shared bedding.

*Sagoromo no sōshi* of Muromachi compendia suggest. To explain this, I think we need to reconsider the reputation I mentioned earlier as both classicist and patronal beneficiary. Sanetaka the classicist was well-acquainted with this text: his diary records him copying the tale several times; he produced a widely-circulated genealogy for it; two of his students compiled the first *Sagoromo* exegeses.[12] Sanetaka knew exactly what the Second Princess affair meant for the tale's end—and, as author-for-hire, what it would mean to the shogunal sponsors I mentioned earlier. Mitamura Masako and others have written persuasively of the Ashikaga shoguns' attempts to usurp imperial and aristocratic cultural authority though the manipulation of *Genji*-related artifacts.[13] It seems plausible, even likely, that Sanetaka, in addition to employing *Sagoromo*'s already canonical poetry to display his literary craft, dramatized this particular aspect of the tale for the benefit of his shogunal patrons. Who better to appreciate its subversive implications?[14] Context may also explain the play's subsequent neglect; why sponsor an artistically unexceptional Nō in the unnostalgic Tokugawa age? It is perhaps worth noting that the Sanetaka student who compiled the identified exegesis was a renga poet and his enthusiasm for *Sagoromo* perhaps more than a little indebted to Teika.

My last example of *Sagoromo* selections comes from Fujioka Sakutarō, the Meiji classicist. Unlike Teika and Sanetaka, this extremely influential critic (to my knowledge at least) never produced a literary version of the monogatari—but he did write literary histories, *Kokubungakuzenshi* (1905)

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[12] The unattributed *Sagoromo bundan* and Satomura Jōha's *Sagoromo shitahimo* ; the latter appears with later commentaries and Sanetaka's *Sagoromo* geneaology in *Sagoromo monogatari kochūshaku taisei* (Nihon tosho sentaa, 1979).

[13] See Mitamura Masako's "*Genji monogatari-e* no shinwagaku: kenryokushatachi no Genji monogatari" and Hyōdō Hiromi's "Rekishi to shite no Genji monogatari: chūsei ōken no monogatari", both in *Genji kenkyū* 3 (1998),:137-51 and 152-65, respectively.

[14] Teika himself may well have appreciated this facet of the text: while the *Genji-Sagoromo awase* doesn't seem to privilege poems related to the Second Princess subplot, it does open and close (in chokusenshū fashion, to be sure) with poems by Sagoromo as Emperor, and this and the prominence of *Genji*'s similarly transgressive Oborozukiyo affair may have intrigued another of Teika's patrons: the young Hōjō shogun Minamoto no Sanetomo.

and *Kokubungakushi kōwa* (1907 preface; posthumously published 1922),[15] which equally attest to the selectivity of canonical memory. In our age of increasingly specialized literary and critical activities, Fujioka is perhaps as close an authority to these earlier figures as we are likely to find. In the case of *Sagoromo* at least, his pronouncements have been as influential as Teika or Sanetaka's because they are so widely taught: re-printings aside, his *Kokubungaku zenshi* comes out from three different publishers, including as recently as 1974.

So, where does Fujioka place *Sagoromo* in his versions of Heian literary history? In a word, second—both physically and figuratively—to *Genji*. As you will recall from Robert Khan's talk yesterday, Fujioka and his peers were no great fans of post-*Genji* monogatari. Fujioka's opening lines on *Sagoromo* in *Kokubungaku zenshi* epitomize the *aryū* or "epigone" treatment they helped standardize: "The glory of the Fujiwara reached its zenith with Michinaga and the development of the Heian novel, with *Genji*; thereafter, no such peerless masterpieces appeared. . . . Later authors were dazzled by [*Genji*''s] brilliance; they revered and imitated it, occupying an inferior position to which they tamely submitted" (164). When Fujioka finally names *Sagoromo*, it is primarily in plot summary parallels with *Genji*. Moreover, while he grants *Sagoromo*'s popularity and even suggests that this monogatari (thanks to its shorter length) is better unified than *Genji*, he is careful to distinguish popularity from literary distinction, which he asserts in the equally dismissive *Kokubungakushi kōwa* only the test of time (and presumably the advent of critics like himself) can make clear (1-2). Perhaps for this reason Fujioka makes no attempt to consider *Sagoromo* in light of its own history, including it in "the third period" of Michinaga's age (*KZ* ). His *Zenshi* conclusions about *Sagoromo*, that this and other post-*Genji* tales really had no chance to be appreciated on their own merits (173) may sound more sympathetic, but they also reprise the *Genji* -first pattern—it is that text which gets the last word.

At the same time, however, Fujioka's remarks also suggest the special position he and his colleagues granted *Sagoromo*: the best of derivatives, if only by virtue of its unsurpassed faithfulness to the *Genji* plot. This distinc-

[15] Publication information for the versions cited here as follows: *Kokubungakushi kōwa*, rev. ed (Iwanami, 1926); *Kokubungaku zenshi*, vol. 2, *Heianchō hen*, ed. Akiyama Ken et al., Tōyō bunko 247 (Heibonsha, 1974).

tion has I think been crucial to the survival of this textually problematic monogatari (many of those manuscripts I mentioned are variants) in the original-obsessed modern canon. But the exclusive focus on *Genji* parallels, as I discuss in my dissertation, ignores *Sagoromo*'s important innovations in their content and structural use. To note just one example, Fujioka describes one *Sagoromo* character as a double of *Genji*'s comic Omi no kimi, entirely eliding the new figure's much darker fate, self-awarenes, and metaphorical function in the text. The difference is obvious, and we have to ask how Fujioka can miss it—or, rather, why?

The question, as with Teika and Sanetaka, again involves historical moment if not patronage. As Michael Brownstein and others have shown, Fujioka's Meiji teachers and colleagues were busily creating a classical canon to match the literary histories of the West.[16] And canons of course have need of lesser texts, to confirm the greatness of masterpieces by illustrating their literary lineages. A keen awareness of lineage and its role in national myth clearly inform Fujioka's criticism: the opening pages of *Kokubungakushi kōwa* speak of the centrality to the nation of Japan's unbroken imperial line (5). I think the same logic informs his "best poor cousin" characterization of *Sagoromo*: by reinforcing *Genji*'s own status as a classic, this reading buttresses not *Sagoromo* but the canon itself, at least its monogatari subset, as a venerable tradition stemming from its own Amaterasu, not *Taketori*'s okina but the Shining Prince. Not surprisingly, Fujioka says little of Sagoromo's upstart accession.

Let me end with a quick summary of fact. *Sagoromo* today remains ambiguously positioned within the canon. When it is taught or written about even today, three things seem to be mentioned: its poetry, its imperial ending, and above all its close ties to *Genji*; other types of criticism, while they do exist, are rare and do not carry much weight. In short, the kind of selective memories present in Teika, Sanetaka and Fujioka still operate; their renditions, in the service of distinct but similarly extra-textual, even extra-literary projects, have become the critical status quo—although interest in the ending is probably due less to Sanetaka's influence than to the *Mumyōzōshi* critique and modern examinations of the imperial institution. The point remains the same. *Sagoromo monogatari* is not canonized—its cannibaliza-

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[16] See Brownstein, "From *Kokugaku* to *Kokubungaku*: Canon-Formation in the Meiji Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.2 (1987): 435-60.

tions are, depending upon their creators' own canonical status. These renditions doubtless helped preserve the monogatari's name and its modern survival, but they evince and have evoked little interest in the rest of the text—which, like a engine or carcass raided in need, remains for all practical purposes left behind to rot.

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